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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage June 23-25 on KMT presidential candidate Ma Ying-jeou, who announced Saturday his decision to select former premier Vincent Siew as his running mate in next year's presidential election; on the KMT party congress on Sunday; on President Chen Shui-bian's remarks Friday that he will continue to push for a referendum on the island's UN bid under the name "Taiwan," despite U.S. opposition; and on a severe bus crash in Taipei Sunday evening. Both the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" and the pro-unification "United Daily News" on June 24 front-paged the results of their latest opinion surveys, which showed that the Ma-Siew ticket has greatly boosted Ma's approval rating.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" urged both the ruling and opposition parties to work together to push for the proposed referendum on Taiwan's UN bid. A separate "Liberty Times" analysis questioned the United States' opposition to Taiwan's UN bid and asked why Washington lets China get whatever it wants. A "China Times" analysis, however, said both Taiwan and the Taiwan people will be the losers, given the fact that the Chen administration is determined to play the game of offending the United States. An editorial in the limited-circulation, conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" discussed Washington's policy of "strategic ambiguity" and urged Washington to replace it with strategic clarity. An op-ed in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times," written by former AIT chairman Nat Bellocchi, said, "[i]t seems that the US, which would presumably not take sides between the political parties, would bide its time to see which party prevails before the experts in the State Department decide what to recommend to the new US government next year." A separate "China Post" editorial discussed the "U.S.-China Senior Dialogue" and said it indicated that "Washington and Beijing, despite ideological differences, have gradually and steadfastly strengthened their ties." End summary.

A) "Both Ruling and Opposition Parties Should Practice What They Preach and Join Hands Together in Pushing for the Referendum on [Taiwan's] UN Bid"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 500,000] editorialized (6/23):

"... Even though the ruling and opposition parties have different views with regard to the 'name' [used for its UN bid] -- namely, whether Taiwan should join the United Nations under the name 'Taiwan,' 'the Republic of China,' or 'any name that conforms to Taiwan's dignity,' they have reached a consensus over the core values of Taiwan's UN bid. As a result, in consideration of both the internal and external environments, it seems viable that the ruling and opposition parties put aside their disputes over 'name' and the idea of 'confrontation with each other via referenda,' and work together to push for the island's UN bid. They could at least let the United Nations and the international community feel the

mainstream public opinion in Taiwan. In consideration of this, we believe that the ruling and opposition parties should focus their thinking on the issue starting from [the statement of] 'an independent sovereign state composed by the 23 million Taiwan people. ..."

B) "Allowing China to Make Repeated and Unrestricted Demands [on the United States], What Is Washington Afraid of?"

Deputy Editor-in-Chief Tsou Jiing-wen noted in an analysis in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 500,000] (6/23):

"Unless the Blue camp dares to infringe on the Taiwan people's freedom to be their own masters, it is inevitable that a referendum on Taiwan's UN bid will be held in tandem with next year's presidential poll. Given this unavoidable trend of democracy, a more important question that must be investigated is: What is the United States afraid of? Why does it have to give China whatever it wants? If one lays out all the statistical figures, one can hardly find any reason why the United States should be afraid of China.

...

"Since it is unlikely [for Beijing] to restrain Pyongyang, and since the issue on Iraq is gradually moving up from the nadir, why do the egghead staff in the core authorities in Washington still let China lead them around by the nose? One cannot help but wondering whether it is because China's 'lobbying' is rising as well, and it has offered 'generous' [benefits] so that the staff [in Washington] have decided to accept whatever information China provides, and they can no longer differentiate the U.S. interests from China's interests. If the answer is no, then it must be because this generation of U.S. officials in charge of East Asian affairs is so incompetent that it cannot even play the easiest Taiwan card! No matter what the truth is, what is certain is that the Taiwan people have already acquired the necessary knowledge, and they will by no means let

another power determine their destiny. Taiwan's strategic position is [important] in military, diplomatic, economic and political aspects, and these bargaining chips can at least allow Taiwan to choose its own path."

C) "Speaking in a Tone like That of the Boxers, Can [President Chen] Really Lead Taiwan into the International Community?"

Journalist Lin Shu-ling wrote in an analysis in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (6/23):

"In order to manipulate the 'referendum on the island's UN bid under the name Taiwan,' Chen has chosen to confront the United States; he said what he has been doing is to [pave the road] for Taiwan's future president, so that the next president will not fear the United States or China. The question is: By doing so, will [Chen] be able to lead Taiwan into the international community and break the island's predicament of being marginalized? Or is Taiwan getting the completely opposite result? ... Bian said, in a tone like that of the 'Boxers,' that [Taiwan] must not be afraid of the United States, but Taiwan needs the U.S. assistance in every way ranging from the number of diplomatic allies it wants to maintain; its participation in the international activities; and the transits granted to its high-ranking officials. In particular, when it comes to the U.S.-Taiwan free trade agreement that can save the island's trade and economics from the crisis of being marginalized, Washington still said no to Taiwan, regardless how loud the Taiwan government has been crying out for it.

"Taiwan needs the United States more than vice versa, and such an extreme imbalance is a fact that no one can change. ... The Bian administration is determined to play this game of offending the United States. It is too early to tell whether the Green camp can secure a victory [in the presidential election], but it is certain that our country and the Taiwan people will both be the losers."

D) "The U.S. Strategic Ambiguity"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (6/25) :

"... But Washington's strategic ambiguity has been arbitrarily interpreted in Taipei, as well as in Beijing. President Chen Shui-bian regards Taiwan and China as two countries on opposite sides of the Strait, or, in his own words, 'one country on each side of the Strait.' He declared it as the status quo, which, of course, is considered a unilateral move on the part of Taipei to change the status quo. Beijing has deployed close to 1,000 cruise missiles, all targeting Taiwan, and passed an Anti-Secession Law to codify an automatic invasion of the island if independence is declared. China has gotten away without an American censure. Well, Uncle Sam does not want to specify what action it will take on the question of a threat to use force against Taiwan, and has chosen to keep his mouth shut.

"But Chen is ready to write a new constitution for Taiwan before he steps down on May 20 next year. He does not think the adoption of the Constitution is a unilateral move to change the status quo, although it is considered a declaration of de jure independence, which the United States certainly does not support. Washington has to replace strategic ambiguity with strategic clarity and tell Chen clearly that the United States opposes any step toward independence. That may be the only way to deter Chinese aggression against Taiwan."

E) "Should Taiwan Follow Singapore?"

Nat Bellocchi, former AIT chairman and now a special adviser to the "Liberty Times Group," opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (6/24):

"... While China has greatly strengthened itself, the people of Taiwan have become more 'Taiwanese.' Beijing will continue to insist that Taiwan is part of China, and will continue to force the issue. The US will find it increasingly difficult to pursue its policies with China and Taiwan. It seems that the US, which would presumably not take sides between the political parties, would bide its time to see which party prevails before the experts in the State Department decide what to recommend to the new US government next year."

F) "Sino-U.S. Dialogue"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (6/23) :

"... In recent years, the United States and China, the world's sole superpower and the world's fastest growing power respectively, have

established ongoing and regular dialogue to discuss often contentious issues. This indicates that Washington and Beijing, despite ideological differences, have gradually and steadfastly strengthened their ties. ... For the mainland, the dialogue provides an opportunity to cement ties with Washington -- Taiwan's most important ally and supporter. For the United States, the dialogue is useful for it to discuss matters for which it needs China's help: Iran, North Korea and Darfur, for example. In either case, Taiwan is marginalized."

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